

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release
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Davis to Examine MS-13 and Other Gang Activity
In Northern Virginia and Greater D.C. Region

What: **Government Reform Committee Field Hearing,**
"MS-13 and Counting: Gang Activity in Northern Virginia"

When: **Friday July 14, 2006, 10:00 A.M.**

Where: **Fairfax City Hall, Room 305, Fairfax, VA**
Fairfax City Hall is located at 10455 Armstrong Street

Background: Gang violence has become a sad reality in recent years in Northern Virginia and the greater Washington region. Much of this violence is linked to the dangerous Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, gang, which was originally founded in Los Angeles during the 1980s by refugees of the El Salvadoran civil war.

In recent years, police reports have included the following incidents: a Fairfax County youth had his hands hacked to shreds by a MS-13 member wielding a machete; a 17-year-old Herndon youth shot to death by a bicycle-riding gunman with "MS" tattooed on his forehead; and 22-year-old Fredy Reyes-Castillo beaten to death in a Reston park by four MS-13 members.

Most recently, on July 1, three young men were murdered in Prince George's County, Maryland, allegedly by members of MS-13.

MS-13 and other gangs, according to the FBI, engage in murder, rape, extortion, people smuggling, drug dealing, and witness intimidation.

Approximately 30 distinct gangs with as many as 5,000 members thrive in Northern Virginia. These numbers are compiled by the Northern Virginia

Regional Gang Task Force, a multi-jurisdictional group that combines federal and local forces to combat gang activity in Northern Virginia.

Since the federally funded Task Force began in 2002, there has been a noticeable decrease in violent gang-related activity in the Northern Virginia. At the same time, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency has noted an increase in gang violence in Montgomery County by gang members who live in Northern Virginia – with some attributing this shift in gang activity in Maryland to the effectiveness of the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force.

This hearing, called by Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA), will examine the relationship between law enforcement and public and private organizations combating transnational street gangs. Other local Members of Congress are expected to attend.

Many smaller communities only have two options in responding to at-risk youth involvement in gangs: lock the individuals up in juvenile facilities, or return them to the streets. Under either of these options, too often the youths will be rearrested. To combat this vicious cycle, communities must undertake prevention and intervention efforts to thwart youths' gang involvement. Prevention focuses on youths before they are involved in gangs to help steer them away from gang involvement. Prevention efforts revolve around parents, school systems, and local community groups such as non-profits and faith-based entities.

Among these efforts are special gang prevention and intervention initiatives developed by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington and the Gang Prevention Coordination units established by the gang task force. In addition, governmental units, such as health departments and public school systems, are implementing programs tailored to preventing children from becoming involved in gangs and providing conflict resolution options for children. The localities continue to provide constructive alternatives for at-risk children and communities.

Witnesses:

Gerry Connolly, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

David Albo, Member, Virginia House of Delegates

Robert A. Bermingham, Jr., Coordinator, Fairfax County Gang Prevention Program

Elizabeth Guzman, Assistant Area Executive Director, Boys & Girls Clubs – Prince William Region

Luis Cardona, Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator for Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County

James Spero, Acting Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Special Agent in Charge Office,
U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement

Diego G. Rodriguez, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Criminal Division, Washington
Field Office, Federal Bureau of Investigations

Marla Decker, Deputy Attorney General for Public Safety, Virginia Office of the Attorney
General

Chief Touissant Summers, Jr., Chair, Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force, City of
Herndon Police Department

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